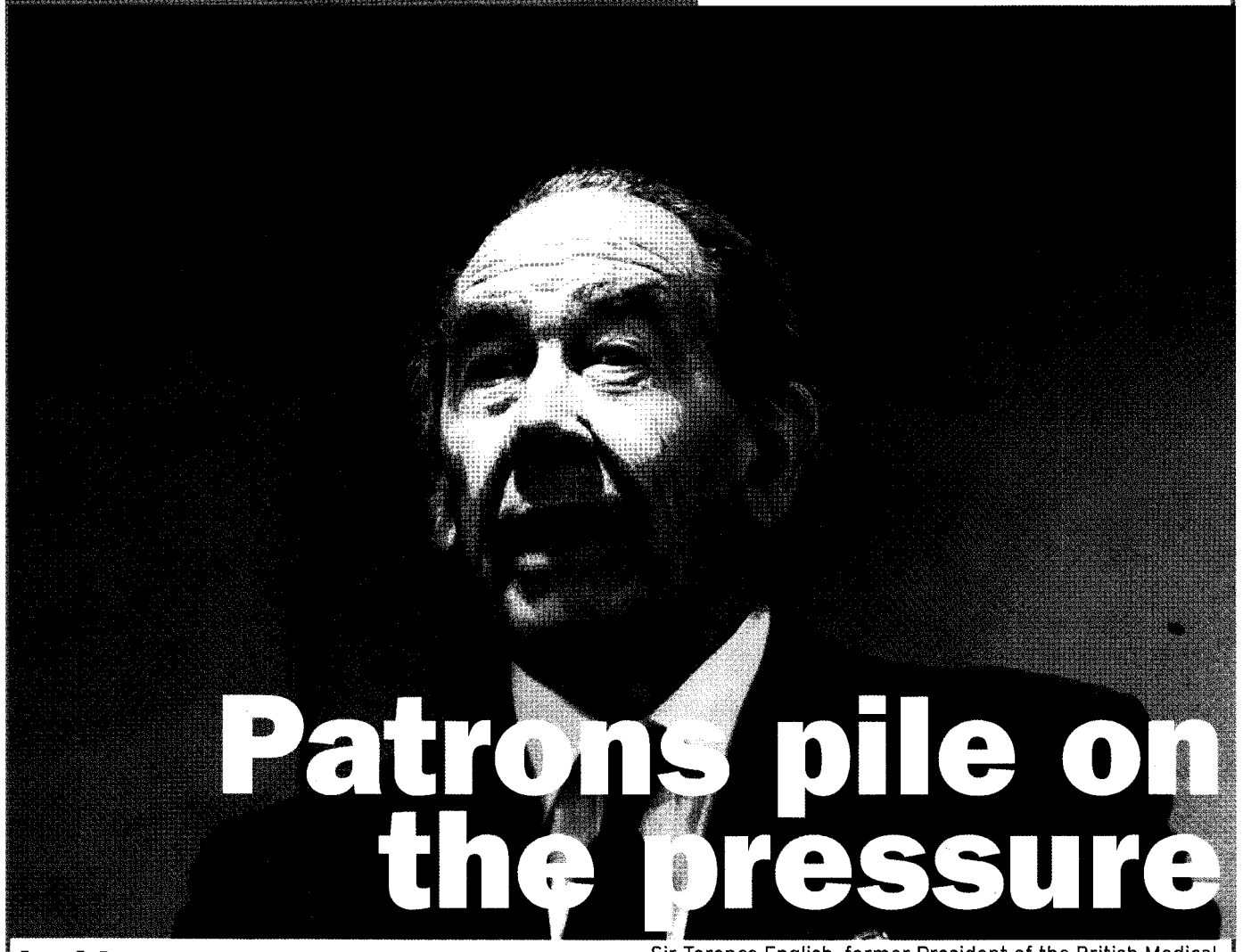
Dignity in dying

Campaign

for choice, for compassion, for change

Issue 7 Summer 2011



Patrons pile on the pressure

Sir Terence English, former President of the British Medical Association, at this year's AGM

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9 TERRY PRATCHETT: CHOOSING TO DIE

Patrons Reverend Professor Paul Badham • Roy Bailey • Professor Eric Bolton CB • Jo Brand • Chris Broad • Rosemary Brown OBE • Sir John Burgh • Carmen Callil • Lesley Close • Jasper Conran • Howard Devoto • Nell Dunn • Sir Terence English KBE FRCS • Brenda Fricker • Professor Anthony Grayling • The Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt • Sir Michael Holroyd CBE • Dame Elisabeth Hoodless DBE • Lord Joel Joffe CBE • Dr Liza Macdonald • Kenan Malik • Ian McEwan • Diana Melly • Rabbi Charles Middleburgh • Sir Jonathan Miller CBE • Deborah Moggach • Dr Michael O'Donnell • Sophie Pandit • Sir Terry Pratchett OBE Heather Pratten • Brian Pretty • Nick Ross • Dame Ruth Silver • Sir Patrick Stewart • Janet Suzman • Professor Ray Tallis • Zoe Wanamaker CBE • Simon Weston OBE • Professor Lewis Wolpert • A.N. Wilson • Matthew Wright

About Dignity in Dying

Dignity in Dying staff

Anna Boehm

Policy Support Officer

Davina Hehir

Director of Legal Strategy & Policy

Ian Walker

Office Manager & Board Support

James Harris

Director of Campaigns & Communications

Jo Cartwright

Press & Campaigns Officer

Lucinda Lodge

Head of Finance

Philip Satherley

Research & Policy Officer

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Who we are

Dignity in Dying is a national campaign and membership organisation. With 25,000 supporters we work to alleviate suffering at the end of life by campaigning for greater choice, control and access to services.

What we want

We want everyone to have what they consider to be a good death, including the option of assisted dying for terminally ill, mentally competent adults.

We believe that everyone has the right to a dignified death.

This means

Choice over where we die, who is present and our treatment options.

Access to expert information on our options, good quality end-of-life care and support for loved ones and carers.

Control over how we die, our treatment and pain relief, and planning our own death.

What we do

We lobby Parliament, keep assisted dying and end-of-life care in the media spotlight, advise people on their end of life rights, and represent terminally people who want the choice of an assisted death by ensuring that their voices are heard.

How you can help

Join us! We are funded entirely by our supporters and are independent of any political, religious or other organisation. If you're not already a member of Dignity in Dying you can join us from as little as £20 per year. Other practical ways to support the campaign can be found in this newsletter and on our website.

Dignity in Dying
181 Oxford Street
London W1D 2JT
Web www.dignityindying.org.uk
Tel 020 7479 7730
Fax 020 7287 1760
Email info@dignityindying.org.uk

Online

Please note that not all views expressed in Campaign are necessarily those of Dignity in Dying.

Chief Executive

Dignity in Dying had some sad news in the last couple of months: in the space of six days, two of our Patrons died. On 28 May, Dr Ann McPherson CBE died of cancer aged 65, and on 3 June, Miriam Karlin OBE died, also of cancer, aged 85. Both were passionate advocates of greater patient choice at the end of life, and both will be much missed.

I approached Ann to be a Patron in August 2009, when she wrote an article called 'An interesting time to die' in the BMJ. Ann's career, as a greatly respected GP, as an author and as founder of Healthtalkonline, showed that she was on the side of her patients. She went on to launch Healthcare Professionals for Assisted Dying (HPAD) in October last year - a growing group of nearly 500 health professionals who want to challenge the perceived wisdom that all doctors and nurses are opposed to a change in the law on assisted dying. I think Ann founded HPAD because she herself was terminally ill and wanted others in her position to have the choice that she was denied. During the short time the group has existed, Ann eloquently helped to demonstrate that assisted dying is an issue that doctors and other healthcare professionals need to engage with.

Miriam also became a Patron two years ago. She was an established and well regarded actress, a member of Dignity in Dying for over thirty years and an advocate of many causes. She told us "the option of an assisted death at the end of our lives would provide the choice and control we all deserve".

Both lived to see important developments in our campaign, most notably the Law Lords victory in 2009. But despite the welcome clarification in the law by the Director of Public Prosecutions, at the moment Switzerland is effectively regulating which British citizens are assisted to die.

Sir Terry Pratchett's documentary on BBC2 in June illustrated this perfectly (see page 10). In the documentary, Terry witnessed the assisted death of Peter Smedley at Dignitas in Switzerland. Peter talked about his desire to be assisted to die before he was physically unable to travel, begging the question; would he still be here if he'd had the option in this country?

The best tribute that Dignity in Dying can pay Ann, Miriam and Peter, is to go on to greater success, to promote the campaign, and ultimately to change the law so people do not have to suffer against their wishes at the end of life. We will do so in their memory, and the memory of many others who have died without the choice of a safe, lawful assisted death.

Sarah Wootton

Mylinh Cao
Press Trainee

Patrick Callaghan
Social Media & Campaigns Trainee

Rachel Watt
Finance Officer

Sarah Wootton
Chief Executive

Tomasz Wlodarczyk
Director of Strategy, Operations & Fundraising

Victoria Holloway
Parliamentary Support Officer

AGM minutes

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Dignity and Choice in Dying held at: The International Coffee Organisation, 22 Berners Street, London, W1T 3DD on Wednesday 18th May 2011.

Professor Nick Moore, Dignity in Dying Chair, chaired the meeting.

Ordinary business:

2010 minutes

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th May 2010 were approved. Approved by all members present.

Accounts

The accounts for the year ended 31st December 2010 were approved and adopted. Approved by all members present.

Auditors

Haysmacintyre were re-appointed as auditors at a fee to be agreed by the Board. Approved by all members present.

Report of the Chair

Nick Moore reflected on his six years as Chair of the Dignity in Dying and the progress he had seen over that period with the issue "moving from the sidelines into the mainstream". Nick thanked John Stephen, Niccola Swan, Sharon Grant and Isky Gordon for their hard work as Board members as they step down this year.

Board elections

Following the recent Board election, Philip Hartropp, Dame Professor Jill Macleod Clark, Ann Leedham and Paul Rossi were announced as newly appointed Board members. Dame Jill Macleod Clark has published over twenty books on nursing, health and the care of older people and in 2001 was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire. Dr Philip Hartropp recently retired as a GP, and spent much of his career working in end-of-life care, and Paul Rossi is former chief executive of Help the Hospices, who went on to be deputy chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, before moving to head up the National Benevolent Institute.

Report of the Treasurer

Edward Turner, Treasurer, presented the financial report for the year to 31 December 2010. Income during the year was £868,000 against a total expenditure of £917,000, leaving a deficit for the year of £49,000. There was an overall decrease in reserves of £13,000 of which £57,000 comprised an increase in the value of investments and £70,000 comprised a draw on reserves. Edward presented a breakdown of where our money comes from and highlighted the importance of legacies and increasing our membership numbers.

Chief Executive's report

Sarah Wootton's report this year focussed on three key points: progress made by the campaign to date; the impact of the Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP) prosecuting policy; and plans for the future. Progress included the Director of Public Prosecutions prosecuting policy on cases of assisting someone to die, Healthcare Professionals for Assisted Dying and the reconstituted All Party Parliamentary Group on Choice at the End of Life, chaired by new Conservative MP Penny Mordaunt. Sarah

went on to look at the impact the DPP's prosecuting policy has had since its introduction in February 2010, with at least 30 cases investigated, and no prosecutions brought, asking who knows how many more are suffering out there?

Finally Sarah focussed her attention on the future, building on the promise to change the law within the decade, she unveiled plans to introduce a Bill within this Parliament, telling members that "...the time for change has come."

Reports from the Campaigns and Policy Team:

James Harris, Director of Campaigns & Communications

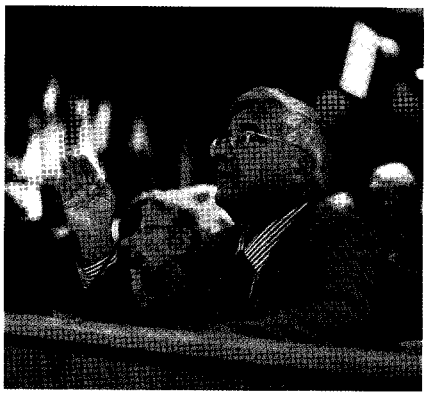
James' report focussed this year on the question - who decides how we die? James discussed the difficulties we face in trying to counter organised opposition and the need for us to remain focussed and constantly active. Whilst much of the organised opposition is religiously motivated, James talked about the disconnect between them and the large majority of people with faith who support assisted dying, as highlighted by the British Social Attitudes Survey 2010.

Tomasz Wlodarczyk, Director of Fundraising, Strategy & Operations

Tomasz updated members on work we have planned to recruit new supporters this year, along with our work to mobilise those supporters to become activists. He unveiled plans for our new campaign website (see page 7) and updated members on our advances online through social media networks Twitter, Facebook and blogging.

Guest speakers

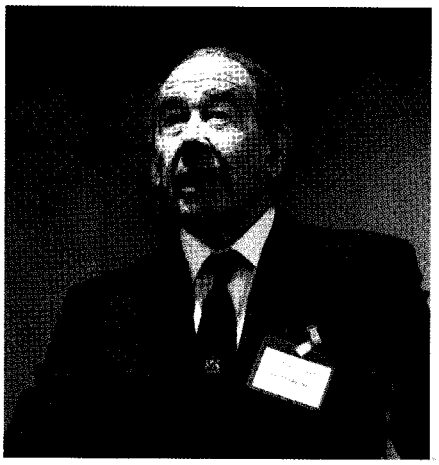
Three of the country's most influential speakers on choice at the end of life took to the podium in the afternoon, each one a patron of Dignity in Dying, and all shared a different perspective on the campaign for assisted dying.



The Revd Professor Paul Badham

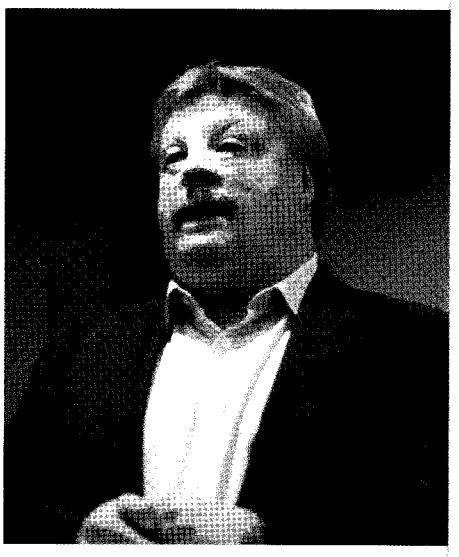
The Reverend Professor Paul Badham was first up, offering a compelling argument that religious belief need not be seen as incompatible with the extension of rights at the end of life to include the option of assisted dying for terminally ill adults. Paul used statistics and evidence collated from both overseas and the UK, and quoted from the Bible to support his personal reasons

Sir Terence English



for supporting legislation.

Next was eminent heart surgeon Sir Terence English, who talked about his long friendship with Lord Joel Joffe who had introduced him to our campaign - a campaign which accorded very much with his own views on the choices he would like should he be dying. Sir Terence expressed his thoughts on where opposition often came from within the medical profession, for example from some palliative care doctors who fear their work could be negatively impacted by assisted dying. Sir Terence also informed members on the work planned by Healthcare Professionals for Assisted Dying to try to counter such concerns.



Simon Weston

Finally, members heard from Falkland's War veteran and campaigner Simon Weston, who spoke passionately about the case for change and the 'hysteria' used by some opponents to scaremonger against assisted dying. He also spoke of his experience of pain and depression and how this had convinced him of the need to strictly regulate and safeguard assisted dying for terminally ill adults.

Assisted dying not 'suicide'

Dignity in Dying's motivation is straightforward: no one should suffer against their wishes at the end of life.

The Suicide Act 1961 makes assisting another person to die a crime punishable by up to 14 years in prison – regardless of the circumstances. The failure of the current law to provide the choice of assisted dying, alongside access to good quality end-of-life care, forces some people to take desperate measures. Not only do people travel abroad to die but others end their lives at home, often using the internet as an information service. In addition to providing a compassionate choice, a new law with up-front safeguards would better protect vulnerable people by ensuring that a dying person's request to die can be made openly, and is fully examined when they are still alive.

We campaign for terminally ill, mentally competent people to have the choice of an assisted death within safeguards, yet some try to deliberately blur the debate by using language such as 'killing', 'suicide' and 'assisted suicide'. But these are different things.

Contrary to the evidence, some claim that a change in the law for terminally ill people would turn into helping elderly or disabled people end their lives (the so-called 'slippery slope'). Such opponents insist on using the language of 'suicide', a word whose suffix "-cide" means "to kill", associating it with behaviour such as "homicide", "genocide" or "infanticide".

The law does not consider the withdrawal of life-prolonging medical treatment murder, even though it will result in a patient's death. Furthermore, if the intention is to relieve pain, the law does not consider providing doses of pain relief which may hasten a patient's death to be manslaughter. Why, therefore, should the law consider helping a dying person to die at a time and in a manner of their choosing, to be suicide?

> My dying brother, John, did not choose suicide. He chose an assisted death. My brother was dying because he had Motor Neurone Disease. He did not want to suffer against his wishes in the last days and weeks of life, and chose instead to travel abroad to have an assisted death.
>
> I understand that some people may support the right of non-terminally ill people to have help to end their lives, but this is a separate issue and, in my opinion, should not be allowed to confuse the debate about whether society should allow terminally ill, mentally competent adults the choice to hasten their death if they consider their suffering to be unbearable.
>
> *Lesley Close*

It is time that we reclaimed the language of the debate. On Wednesday 3rd August, the Suicide Act 1961 will be 50 years old. In its time it was a progressive piece of legislation, which ended the criminalisation of those who sought to end their lives.

However, in an understandable effort to protect people from abuse, it created an anomaly in law; an offence, punishable by up to 14 years in prison, of helping or encouraging someone do something that in itself is not a crime. Of course, we do not want to live in a society where people are free to encourage others to end their lives. Crucially, what this law does not do is distinguish between the actions of those who compassionately help a dying person to die with dignity, at their request, and those who maliciously or irresponsibly encourage someone to end their life.

Around the anniversary of this law, Dignity in Dying will be making the point that assisted dying is not the same as suicide or assisted suicide, and that the law should recognise the difference. Please help us.

ACTION! WRITE TO YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Using our new website (see below) or by finding your local editors address in the newspaper, please write a letter to your local paper on or around 1st August to let people know:

- That the Suicide Act 1961 is now 50 years old and in need of changing.
- The current law criminalises anyone who helps someone to die. The law should differentiate between assisting the suicide of a person who is not terminally ill and assisting the death of a dying person.
- We need a new law which allows assisted dying within up-front safeguards, so that doctors can help terminally ill, mentally competent adults die, at their request.
- Such a change would prevent people from taking matters into their own hands or suffering against their wishes at the end of life.

And from now on, whenever you read, see or hear the media, (whether local or national) reference 'assisted suicide', please contact them to express your disapproval. Assisted dying is a more accurate term for the change we seek.

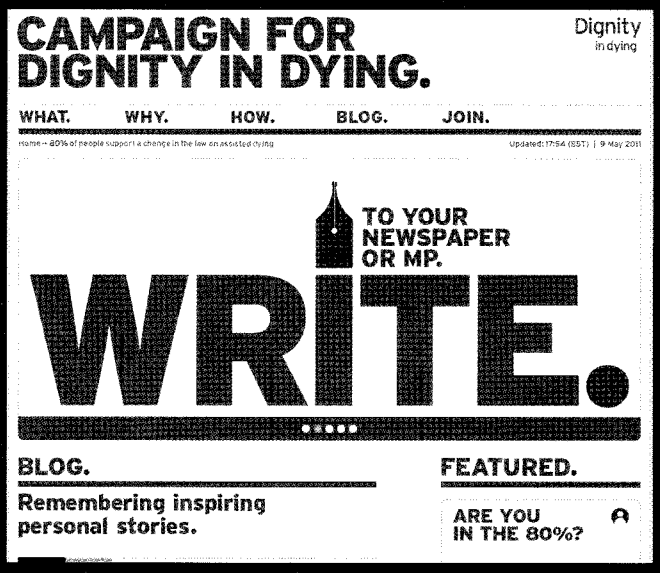
Please keep us updated on your progress by emailing:

languagematters@dignityindying.org.uk

Or write to:

Language Matters, Dignity in Dying, 181 Oxford Street, London W1D 2JT

Get active online



You can take part in this campaign and all our future campaigns online on our new website, **www.campaignfordignityindying.org**

This website is part of our on-going work online using the internet and social media to talk with our supporters. It's a place where you can actively campaign for a change in the law on assisted dying, as well as keep up-to-date with all the news from the campaign trail, as and when it happens.

It doesn't replace www.dignityindying.org.uk - which you can visit for in-depth resources on assisted dying policy, legislation and case studies from around the country - but instead offers a one-stop-shop giving you campaigning tools to change the law. Campaigning tools include the option to write to your MP online, email your local newspapers and forward our campaigns on to friends and family. You can also contribute to our blog, get tips and guidance on different campaigns, donate and keep up-to-date on all the latest facts and figures on assisted dying.

Online campaigning is by no means a replacement of traditional methods; we'll still be busy lobbying MPs, drafting policy and making sure assisted dying is firmly in the media spotlight, but there is a lot of potential with thousands of supporters now available at the click of a button.

The site is now up and running, so please visit **www.campaignfordignityindying.org**, join other supporters online and get active.

News in brief

Switzerland votes to keep assisted suicide

On Sunday 15th May, the Swiss canton of Zurich held referenda on potential reform of their assisted suicide laws (in Switzerland both assisted dying for terminally ill adults, and assisted suicide for non-terminally ill adults, is legalised). The Swiss voted overwhelmingly against the proposals to ban assisted suicide (85%) and to ban foreigners from seeking assistance to die in Swiss clinics (78%). Reactions to the results largely focused on two points: 1) Swiss voters retain the conviction that seriously ill people have a right to control the timing of their death; and 2) that concerns about 'suicide tourism' were overestimated. Chief Executive Sarah Wootton wrote in the 'i' newspaper in praise of the brave decision of Swiss voters showing compassion for foreigners seeking to end their suffering with dignity.

Dying Matters Awareness week, Monday 16th - Sunday 22nd May

Supporting Awareness Week 16-22 May 2011

The Dying Matters Coalition, of which Dignity in Dying and Compassion in Dying are members, launched an awareness week, aiming to get people talking about death and dying, and providing support for those nearing the end-of-life. Stands were set up in hospitals around the country and information packs sent to GP surgeries. An opinion poll found that there is an historical reluctance to talk about death and about preparations for death, such as funeral planning and wills. The coalition called for better end-of-life care planning by encouraging discussion between patients, their families and doctors.

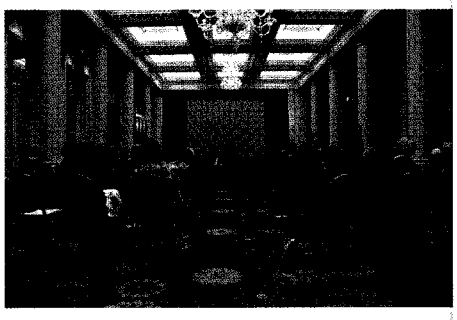
Re-elected Margo MacDonald MSP renews campaign for assisted dying

Margo's renewed assisted dying campaign in Scotland aims to 'simplify' the conditions set out in her last Bill, by focusing on the needs and rights of the patient. Her re-election was a shining example to Parliamentarians that taking a stance on a moral issue of conscience does not necessarily weaken one's electoral chances

Launch of Compassion in Dying's End of Life Rights Information Line

Dignity in Dying's partner charity, Compassion in Dying, launched its End-of-Life Rights Information Line. The launch coincided with the results of a YouGov poll, which found that there was a large disparity between what people wanted for end of life medical treatment, and what they had made provisions for in legal documents, such as in an Advance Decision. For example, six out of ten adults (60%) would only want comfort care at the end of their lives, but just 3% had made their treatment wishes clear in an Advance Decision.

Screening of award-winning film on assisted dying



Screening of 'Third Star'

Dignity in Dying was proud to host a screening of 'Third Star', written by Vaughan Sivell, and starring Benedict Cumberbatch as a terminally ill man going on a final journey with close friends to the beautiful Pembrokeshire coast. Writer Vaughan Sivell, Sir Terry Pratchett and Edward Turner each gave speeches on the night, in praise of Dignity in Dying's campaign and the remarkably poignant film that embodied the very human and compassionate arguments for individual choice in assisted dying.

Dignity in Dying visits the Isle of Man

Dignity in Dying held a public meeting on the Isle of Man on 22nd June, as well as addressing the Isle of Man's parliament, Tynwald, and meeting members and supporters of the campaign. The meetings went well and Dignity in Dying hopes to support a Bill to legalise assisted dying on the Isle of

Man in the near future. Email dignityindyingiom@manx.net to get involved.

Patrons hard at work

Dignity in Dying Patrons have been keeping assisted dying in the media spotlight with media interviews with Sir Patrick Steward, Chris Broad and Sir John Burgh, and a highly influential documentary with Sir Terry Pratchett in June. Sir Patrick Stewart spoke on his support for our campaign in a Sunday Times exclusive in April, cricketer Chris Broad was featured in the Telegraph talking about his wife's death and encouraging others to submit evidence to the Commission on Assisted Dying, and Sir John Burgh appeared in the Sunday Times in June discussing the suicide of both his sister and her husband. More recently, Nell Dunn and Diana Melly were featured in the Guardian in July talking movingly about their experiences of their partners' deaths.

Emily leaves Dignity in Dying

Emily Halsall, Senior Campaigns Officer, is leaving Dignity in Dying to emigrate to Hong Kong.

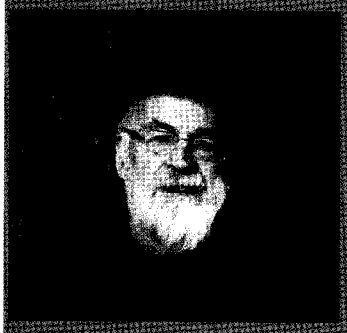
Emily has made a huge impact on the campaign in her three years at Dignity in Dying - producing a wealth of publications aimed at making campaigning easier and providing members and supporters with the facts, arguments and confidence necessary to lobby MPs, write to the media and speak to friends and family about the need for a change in the law on assisted dying.

Emily has been instrumental in ensuring we reach our supporters in both traditional and modern ways - developing member meetings, this newsletter and our email updates, as well as making huge strides in advancing our online social media work.

Emily said: "I am very sorry to be leaving such an incredible organisation, particularly the staff members and supporters with whom I've built up close relationships with over the years. I will continue to support the campaign from afar and hope to see you all at a future AGM!"

Emily will be sorely missed by everyone at Dignity in Dying - we wish her all the best for the future.

Sir Terry Pratchett's documentary, Choosing to die



On Monday 13th June, 1.7 million people sat down to watch Terry Pratchett's powerful and moving journey through the issues of assisted dying. The documentary followed the assisted deaths of Peter Smedley and Andrew Colgan and attracted much media attention as it showed the last moments and death of Peter, who had Motor Neurone Disease, at Dignitas in Switzerland.

While the programme faced vocal criticism from a small number of organisations opposed to a change in the law, the response was overwhelmingly positive with a YouGov opinion poll finding 70% of people felt it was "right to show the film".

Whatever viewers' takes on the programme content, there was no doubt it was a stark and honest portrayal of the reality that many dying adults and their loved ones face at the end of their lives in this country. Without the option of assisted dying in the UK, dying adults will continue to take these decisions without the up-front safeguards that legislation would provide, and we thank Sir Terry for making such an important documentary about such an important issue.

We also followed the debate on Twitter that evening and were overwhelmed by the numerous blogs and opinion pieces sent to us from supporters in response to the programme. To join Dignity in Dying on Twitter please visit **www.twitter.com/dignityindying**

Being a spokes-person

Would you like to be more vocally active and involved in the campaign? We need new spokespeople to speak out on assisted dying in the media and in this interview Rhea Williams, a spokesperson since 2009, shares her experiences and reasons for joining our community of case studies.

Why did you decide to be a spokesperson for Dignity in Dying?

Many of my friends are experiencing the death of a loved one for the first time, and they often find the circumstances of suffering and indignity distressing; they want to talk about death and all its complications. I became a spokesperson because I think we all need to listen to others and to talk gently and rationally about death and the mode of dying. I also want people to know why assisted dying is an important issue, how it affects many people in the UK, and lend my voice to the campaign for a more compassionate law.

What do you think you contribute to the campaign as a spokesperson?

I think spokespeople provide a valuable link between the public and the lawmakers; we can communicate real first-hand experiences and opinions, both to people in authority and to the general public who may

not have considered the issue of assisted dying. Our vocal support and presence in the media is so important: it keeps assisted dying in the public spotlight and on parliamentary agendas.

What have you done so far as a spokesperson?

Dignity in Dying is flexible so I can do as much or as little as I can, and fit it around my busy life. I recently had great fun doing an interview for a student documentary. The crew and Dignity in Dying staff members came to my house; we shared lunch and spoke on many issues to do with death and dying, the campaign, and what I'd like for my own death. This was for a young journalism student who was completing his film project on assisted dying. I had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

What would you say to others interested in becoming a spokesperson?

I'd say that it's not always important to have your own story; what is important is to listen to others and empathise with people and the cause. Dignity in Dying regularly sends out spokesperson updates, with selected news coverage and handy bits of information on the campaign, and special requests for spokespeople. The booklets I've had are excellent: they provide the information in short, easy, digestible chunks. They give one the confidence to speak from a point of knowledge rather than just emotion. It is surprisingly easy and fun talking to the media, and Dignity in Dying does a wonderful job briefing and tailoring each spokesperson to their preferred and suitable media outlet.

ACTION! BECOME A SPOKESPERSON

Would you like to become a spokesperson? Do you have a story to tell? Or want to get more involved? Contact Mylinh Cao for more information at **mylinh.cao@dignityindying.org.uk**, or phone 020 7479 7734.

You will receive a spokesperson's pack, which includes a registration form, booklets, Dignity in Dying distribution cards (to hand out to friends), badges and other campaigning materials.

Compassion in dying update

Compassion in Dying, Dignity in Dying's partner charity established in 2007, updates us on the launch of their new End-of-life Rights Information Line, some of its more recent policy work and introduces Sue Peters, the newest member of the team.

Compassion in Dying opposes rise in LPA fees

Compassion in Dying has submitted a response to a Ministry of Justice consultation on the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) fees. The OPG registers Lasting Power of Attorneys (in England and Wales), which allow you to nominate someone to make decisions about your medical treatment on your behalf if you lose capacity.

In our consultation response we argued that it is every citizen's right to choose what medical treatment they receive. And we said that being able to appoint a Lasting Power of Attorney was a vital part of this right. On that basis we said that the government should not increase the fees for registering an LPA and should reduce the "resubmission fee" which you currently have to pay if you need to resubmit your form.

Health and Social Care Bill

The Health and Social Care Bill, which is going through Parliament at the moment, has been described as "the biggest shake up of the NHS in 60 years". Compassion in Dying is concerned about what the Bill will mean for end-of-life care, so we wrote to the Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley, and in May, we received a long reply. We were pleased that Mr. Lansley recognised the points we made, and we will keep you updated on progress with the Bill.

Compassion in Dying is seeking a new Treasurer

Compassion in Dying is looking for an honorary Treasurer to join the Board of Trustees in November 2011. A background in finance or accounting is required and experience of charity accounting would be very useful. The Trustees meet four to five times a year in central London and, in addition, the Treasurer would be responsible for overseeing the production of the charity's annual accounts.

For further information, please email **chair@compassionindying.org.uk** or telephone **020 7479 7731.**

Compassion in Dying is a charity that supports individuals at the end of life to have what they consider to be a good death.

We provide information and support around patient rights and choices, and conduct research into end-of-life issues.

Chair: Rowena Ironside

Chief Executive: Sarah Wootton

Address:

181 Oxford Street, London W1D 2JT

Email: info@compassionindying.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7479 7731

Website: www.compassionindying.org.uk

NEW! Find us on

Sue Peters

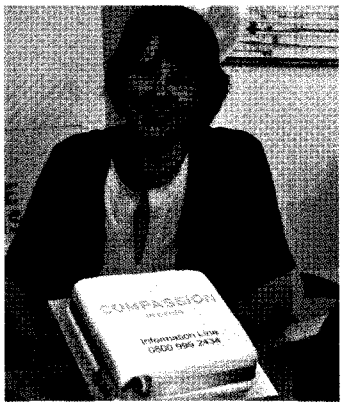
Information Line Support Officer

Jo Thomas

Charity Development Officer

Compassion in dying update

Following the exciting launch of our new End-of-Life Rights Information Line, Sue Peters, our Information Line Support Officer tells us why she joined Compassion in Dying and what kind of queries the free-phone line will be able to help with.



When and why did you join Compassion in Dying?

I joined Compassion in Dying at the beginning of May, allowing me time to become familiar with the organisation before the launch of the Information Line on 19th May.

I am very pleased and excited to be part of this new project, providing information and support to people who are concerned about their rights around end-of-life care. It is a great opportunity to offer information and clarification in an area where many people find some aspects unclear.

Can you tell us a bit more about yourself?

I am a trained, practising counsellor and, apart from general counselling for a broad range of issues, I have extensive experience of working with carers in different parts of the country. As well as that I have been a volunteer for Cruse for the past two years, supporting bereaved people. I have found this work very moving and rewarding.

I have also worked as an adviser and debt counsellor for the Citizen's Advice Bureau, providing a broad range of information to enquirers.

What kinds of questions can the Information Line answer?

You can contact me if you have questions about what your rights are at the end of life or if you would like information about how you can make sure your treatment wishes are respected, for example by making an Advance Decision or Lasting Power of Attorney. Compassion in Dying can provide free Advance Decision packs which allow people to record their wishes around consent to, or refusal of medical treatments at the end of life in the event that they lose mental capacity, or lose the ability to communicate their wishes to the health professionals caring for them. A valid Advance Decision is a legally binding document. We can also provide a guide to Your Rights at the End of Life, which covers wider issues such as end-of-life care plans and the role of carers and family members.

How do I contact the Information Line?

The Information Line is open between 11am and 3pm, Monday to Friday.

You can contact me by e-mail at **sue.peters@compassionindying.org.uk**, by letter to Compassion in Dying, 181 Oxford Street, London W1D 2JT or by telephoning the Information Line on **0800 999 2434.**

WAYS TO GIVE TO COMPASSION IN DYING

Number 2: Gift Aid

As a registered charity, Compassion in Dying can claim the tax back on your donation if you are a UK tax payer. This means that if you make a donation of £10 and you are a basic rate tax payer Compassion in Dying can claim an extra £2.80 at no extra cost to you, making the full donation worth £12.80.

Compassion in Dying can claim Gift Aid on donations retrospectively.

Please note, Gift Aid is only applicable to donations for Compassion in Dying, as it is a registered charity. Dignity in Dying is not a charity and therefore cannot claim Gift Aid on donations.

What to do

If you ever receive an appeal letter from Compassion in Dying, please make sure you tick the Gift Aid box if you are a UK tax payer.

If you would like more information, please call **020 7479 7731**